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Interval before the Storm

In the weeks following that first meeting, I was called by the same men for several interviews. Our conversations varied very little from the first occasion. Once they asked me to provide them with a list of all the Americans and Europeans I had known, together with their occupations and the place and circumstance in which I had met each one. Another time they asked me to write about the activities of our office. But when I handed them the pages I had written, they barely glanced at them. While exhorting me to denounce my former employer, they did not ask me any concrete questions about the company. They never went beyond insinuating that Shell had done something wrong and that I was a part of whatever the crime was.

Indeed, I had the impression that the men were marking time, waiting for instructions from above before going any further. Actually, unbeknownst to me and to the Chinese people, the delay in activating the movement was due to a fierce struggle among the leaders of the Chinese Communist Party. The point of contention was who should conduct the Cultural Revolution: the established Party apparatus or a special committee of Maoists appointed by Mao Zedong as chairman of the Central Committee.

It was later revealed that early in August, at a Central Committee meeting, Mao had written a Big Character Poster entitled "Fire Cannonballs at the Headquarters." In it he made the extraordinary accusation that the government administration (headed by Liu Shaoqi as chairman of the People's Republic) and the Party Secretariat (headed by Deng Xiaoping as chief party secretary) were the headquarters of China's capitalist class because, he said, their policies protected and served the interests of the capitalist class. This was a very serious and shocking charge against the entire Party apparatus and the administrative organization of Communist China. Mao was able to make the accusation against Liu and Deng because he controlled the armed forces through his protégé Lin Biao, who was the defense minister. Attempting to salvage his own position under the circumstances, Liu Shaoqi made a pro forma statement of self-criticism, saying that his economic policy of allowing private plots for the peasants and free markets to meet the needs of the people in the cities had encouraged the revival of capitalism in China and represented a retreat from the road of socialism. Perhaps Liu Shaoqi believed he could save Mao's face by such an admission. The fact remained that Liu Shaoqi's economic policy rescued China from economic collapse after the disastrous failure of Mao Zedong's Great Leap Forward Campaign in 1958–60. However, Liu's admission of guilt was to prove a tactical mistake. It placed him at a great disadvantage and opened the way for the Maoists to escalate their attack against him and his followers in the government.

Mao's victory at the Central Committee meeting led to the appointment of a special committee of left-wing Maoists to conduct the Cultural Revolution. As time went on and the Party and government apparatus became paralyzed under the attack of the Red Guards and the Revolutionaries, this committee became the highest organ of government. Its members, including Mao's wife Jiang Qing, enjoyed extraordinary power and were all elected to the Party Politburo. Throughout the years of the Cultural Revolution, Jiang Qing made use of her position as Mao's wife to become his spokeswoman and representative, supposedly transmitting Mao's orders and wishes but in fact interpreting them to suit herself. A ruthlessly ambitious woman who had been kept out of Chinese political life for decades, she

would now tolerate no opposition, imaginary or otherwise. Tens of thousands of Party officials, artists, writers, scientists, and common people who fell under the shadow of her suspicion were cruelly persecuted. Scores of them died at the hands of her trusted "Revolutionaries."

At this August Central Committee meeting, Defense Minister Lin Biao emerged as Mao's most ardent supporter. His eulogy of Mao was contained in the meeting's final communiqué, published in the newspapers. Lin claimed that Mao was "the greatest living Marxist of our age," with one stroke placing Mao ahead of the Soviet leaders, including Stalin, as the true successor of Lenin. During the entire ten years of the Cultural Revolution, even after Lin Biao was disgraced, this claim was maintained by the Maoists.

One day, soon after the publication of the communiqué of the Central Committee meeting, Mr. Hu, a friend of my late husband's, called on me. Because in China male friendship usually excluded wives, after my husband's death his friends ceased coming to our house. Only Mr. Hu continued to appear on Chinese New Year's Day to pay me the traditional courtesy call. He generally stayed only a short time, inquiring after my daughter and me and wishing us good health and happiness in the new year. He always mentioned my husband and told me how much he had esteemed him as a man and how much he had valued his friendship. Then he would take his leave, placing on the table a red envelope containing a tip for my servants, an old custom observed by only a few conservative people in China after the Communist Party took over. I was amused by his visits and thought Mr. Hu rather quaint but charmingly sentimental.

When Lao-zhao announced him, I was surprised. But I told Lao-zhao to usher him to the drawing room and serve tea.

Mr. Hu had been the owner of a paint factory. His product was well known in China and was exported to Hong Kong and Southeast Asia. After the Communist army took over Shanghai, he continued to operate under the Communist government's supervision. In 1956, during the Socialization of Capitalist Enterprises Campaign, his factory was taken over by the government, which promised all the capitalists an annual interest of 7 percent of the assessed value of their enterprises for ten years. Though the assessed value of the enterprises was only a fraction

of their true worth, the capitalists had no alternative but to accept. Because of his technical skill, the government invited Mr. Hu to remain with his factory as chief engineer and assistant manager when Party officials took over.

A well-educated Chinese, Mr. Hu was quite untouched by Western civilization. He wrote excellent calligraphy; his conversation was sprinkled with traditional literary allusions. He was not bothered by the antiforeign attitude of the Communist regime because his own knowledge and interest did not go beyond the borders of China. On the whole he fared better during political campaigns because Party officials were less suspicious of people like Mr. Hu who had no foreign contacts than they were of those who had been educated abroad. His philosophical attitude towards the loss of his own factory and his ready acceptance of a subordinate position never ceased to amaze me. My husband once told me that while most capitalists found the Party officials assigned to their factories extremely difficult to deal with, Mr. Hu managed to establish a friendly relationship with the Party secretary who had superseded him as head of his factory.

"I hear you are involved in this latest political movement, the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. I wonder how you are getting on," Mr. Hu said, explaining the reason for his visit.

"Not very well, I'm afraid. The Shanghai office of Shell is being investigated. I have been questioned, and I had to attend a struggle meeting against our former chief accountant. The men who talked to me seemed to imply there were some irregularities in the firm's activities. But they won't say what they mean. I'm really rather puzzled. I have never been involved in a political movement before."

Lao-zhao brought in the silver tea set, my best china, and a large plate of small iced cakes, as well as thinly cut sandwiches in the best British tradition, something I reserved for my British and Australian friends who understood the finer points of afternoon tea. This was Lao-zhao's idea of treating Mr. Hu as an honored guest. As he placed the tray on the coffee table in front of the sofa, the telephone in the hall rang and he went out to answer it. He came back almost immediately and said, "It's those people again. They want you to go over there right now for another interview."

"Tell them I'm busy. I will go tomorrow," I said.

Lao-zhao went out. I could hear him engaged in a heated argument on the telephone. Then he came back and said, "They insist you must go at once. They say it's very important."

"May I ask who is calling? If it is important, don't delay going because I'm here," Mr. Hu said to me.

"It's those officials who have been questioning me," I told him.

"Oh, you must go at once. How can you refuse to go when those people call you! Please make haste. I'll stay here and wait for you. I want to know more about your position. I owe it to your husband, my dear old friend, to give you some advice. It's my duty. You are inexperienced in dealing with those men. They are mean and spiteful. You must not offend them," Mr. Hu said. He appeared really worried.

I was glad that he was going to wait for me, because I very much wanted to hear what he had to say about the Cultural Revolution and the recent Central Committee meeting. I left the house just after four. When I returned at eight, Mr. Hu was still there. As I walked into the house, he came out of the drawing room to welcome me back and beamed with pleasure and relief.

"I'm sorry I have been so long."

"Do sit down and rest. Tell me, how did it go?"

Lao-zhao brought me a cup of hot tea. While sipping it, I described to Mr. Hu my interview with the Party officials.

In addition to the usual two men, there had been a third person present who might have been their superior. Perhaps to impress this new man, they were even more unpleasant than usual. When I entered the room, one of them said sternly, "Why didn't you want to come?"

"I was busy. You should have telephoned this morning."

In the past, one of them had always motioned me to sit down. But today they just let me stand.

"We are not conducting a dinner party. We are conducting an investigation. Whenever we need to talk to you, you just have to come immediately," he said with a sneer.

I decided to sit down anyway.

"Look at this long list of your foreign friends! How come you have so many foreign friends? You must like them and admire their culture." He looked at me accusingly. Then he went on,

"You said they were all friendly towards China and the Chinese people and that some of them were born here and spent their childhood years here. You claim some of them admire Chinese culture and speak our language. Yet included here are men whose ancestors made fortunes in the opium trade. They used to own factories, warehouses, ships, everything under the sun, in China. Now they have lost them all. So how could they have friendly feelings towards the People's Government? Yes, they might have liked China when the Kuomintang was here, when they exploited the Chinese people as much as they wanted and were able to amass huge fortunes. But they definitely cannot like China now. And you talked about the diplomats having friendly feelings for China. That's even more ridiculous! Diplomats are spies sent here by their governments to gather information to be used against us. How could they feel friendly towards us? It's no use your pasting gold on their faces to make them look like benevolent Buddhas. They are our enemies. But they are your friends. Now it is quite clear where you stand, isn't it?"

"I got to know these people not because I went out of my way to seek their acquaintance or friendship. Most of them I met when my late husband was a diplomat or when he was in charge of the Shanghai office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the old days."

"The Shanghai office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the reactionary Kuomintang government! Your husband was a senior official of the reactionary Kuomintang government, and later he became the general manager of a foreign capitalist firm," he said sarcastically. "Your husband's career was nothing to be proud of."

"He became the general manager of the Shanghai office of Shell with the approval of the Shanghai Industry and Commerce Department of the People's Government. The department had to accept his power of attorney for the appointment. As for being an official of the Kuomintang government, he stayed in Shanghai in 1949 instead of going with the Kuomintang government to Taiwan. Doesn't that show he supported the Communist Revolution and was ready to welcome the establishment of the People's Government?"

"There might have been other reasons why he stayed. We will deal with his case later. Now we want you to denounce British imperialism and confess everything you did for Shell as their faithful agent."

"Everything I did for Shell was in accordance with the laws and regulations of the People's Government," I declared emphatically.

The new man had not spoken but smoked incessantly, filling the room with the smell of bad tobacco. Now he tossed the butt of his cigarette on the floor and crushed it with his foot. He looked at me steadily for a few seconds to intimidate me before saying, "Have you lived a completely blameless life? All your life you have been associated with foreigners, especially the British. Do you mean to say that you have never done anything or said anything that was not altogether correct?"

"Whether I did or said anything incorrect or not, I know for a certainty that I never did anything against the People's Government," I said firmly.

"That's for us to judge. At least you now admit the possibility that you might have done or said something that was incorrect," he said with a smile.

"Nonsense! I admitted no such thing!" I said.

The new man seemed to me more subtle than the other two. Though he spoke in a quiet voice instead of shouting, I was sure he was looking for an opportunity to trick me. Now he changed the subject, saying, "Give a résumé of the activities of your office."

I gave a brief account of our work at the office. When I had finished speaking, the man said, "What you have just told us is almost exactly what you have already written. I believe you took the trouble to memorize what you had written. Why this precaution?"

"What I have told you and what I have written are just the same because facts are the same, no matter how many times you talk about them," I said. This interview seemed to have gone on a long time already. I thought of Mr. Hu waiting for me, so I looked at my watch.

"Are you in a hurry to be gone? Perhaps you find this conversation uncomfortable?" The man was enjoying himself, twisting words and situation to suit his purpose.

"I just think you are wasting your time," I said.

"We are not afraid to waste time. We're patient. It took us, the

Communist Party, twenty-two years to overthrow the Kuomintang government. But we succeeded in the end. When we set out to achieve our goal, we pursue it to the end."

There was dead silence. We had reached an impasse. Suddenly the man who spoke at the struggle meeting reverted to his former tactics. He shouted, "We won't let you get away with it! You must provide us with a list of the things you did and said that were wrong, in order to show your sincerity in changing your standpoint. Otherwise, the consequences for you will be serious. We know for a certainty you are a spy for the British!"

This was the first time any of them had actually used the word "spy." Hitherto they had merely hinted at it. Perhaps in the heat of the moment the man exceeded their instructions, for the other two glanced at him in surprise.

I laughed at his outburst and said calmly, "You are quite wrong. I am no more a spy for anybody than you are."

The new man said quickly, "Perhaps there are things you did or said that you don't remember offhand. Why don't you go home and think about it? Write down everything you did and said, no matter how trivial or insignificant. We will give you plenty of time. What about two weeks?"

"Two years will make no difference. I don't intend to make up any story," I told them.

"Well, let's say two weeks. It's painful to admit mistakes. But it has to be done. Our Great Leader compared confession to having an operation. The operation is painful, but only after it is done can one become a new man. You want to be a good citizen of our socialist state, don't you? Then you mustn't lag behind the others. We want you to confess, not because we don't know the facts already, but because we wish to give you a chance to show your sincerity."

I wanted to tell him that he was mad, but I bit my lip and remained silent, hoping not to prolong the senseless dialogue.

He took my silence as a sign that I was ready to do what he wanted, so he dismissed me by saying, "It's getting late. Go home and think about what I have said. We will call you in two weeks' time."

With anger and indignation boiling inside me, I walked out of the building. There were no pedicabs. After waiting at the bus stop for a long time, I had to walk home.

Mr. Hu listened to my story in silence. Lao-zhao came in to announce dinner. My cook had prepared an excellent meal of Chinese dishes because he knew Mr. Hu did not enjoy European cooking. During the meal we did not talk about the unpleasant subject of the Cultural Revolution but discussed my daughter's and his children's activities. We were both proud and pleased that our children seemed to have done well in socialist China in spite of the handicap of their family background.

When we were seated again in the drawing room, I asked Mr. Hu a question that had been in my mind all the time I was with my inquisitors.

"These men gave me the impression that they wanted a confession from me even if I made it up. Could that be the case?"

"Oh, yes, yes. They don't care whether it's true or not as long as they get a confession. That's what they are after."

"But what's the point? Won't they themselves get awfully confused if everyone gives a false confession?" I was genuinely puzzled.

"To get a confession is their job. If they fail, they may be accused of not supporting the movement. The result is that whenever a political movement takes place, many people are attacked and many confessions are made. Later, when the turmoil is over, the sorting out is done. Some of those wrongfully dealt with may be rehabilitated."

"How long do they have to wait for rehabilitation?" I asked.

"Maybe a couple of years. Maybe it never happens. In each organization three to five percent of the total must be declared the 'enemy' because that is the percentage mentioned by Chairman Mao in one of his speeches."

"How terrible!" I exclaimed.

"Yes, it's really bad. There isn't really such a high percentage of people who oppose the People's Government. To fill their quota, the Party officials often include people whom they dislike, such as those who are disgruntled and troublesome, in the list of enemies. But no individual should make a false confession, no matter how great the pressure is." Mr. Hu said this with great seriousness. He looked at me steadily, as if to make sure I got his message, and added, "That has always been my policy during each political movement."

I understood that this was the advice he had come to give me.

He did not say outright, "You mustn't give a false confession, no matter how great the pressure," because in a Chinese household the well-trained servant always remained within earshot ready to be of service, especially when there was a guest. Mr. Hu did not want Lao-zhao to hear him telling me not to confess. He was a cautious man, and he trusted no one.

"There always comes a time when a man almost reaches the end of his endurance and is tempted to write down something, however untrue, to satisfy his inquisitors and to free himself from intolerable pressure. But one mustn't do it. Party officials will never be satisfied with the confession. Once one starts confessing, they will demand more and more admissions of guilt, however false, and exert increasing pressure to get what they want. In the end, one will get into a tangle of untruths from which one can no longer extract oneself. I have seen it happen to several people." Mr. Hu was still speaking in the third person and did not say, "You mustn't."

His advice was timely and valuable. I was grateful to him for taking the trouble to come and moved by his friendship for my late husband, which was his motive for stretching out a helping hand to me. When he thought I understood what he had come to say, he spoke of political movements in general terms. He told me that he was a veteran of many such movements and had learned by bitter experience how to deal with them.

"What do you think of the communiqué of the Central Committee meeting?" I asked him.

Mr. Hu shook his head and sighed. After a moment he said, "Chairman Mao has won. It's not unexpected." Then he added, "The beginning of a political movement is always the worst period. The hurricane loses its momentum after a few months and often fizzles out after about a year."

"A year! What a long time!" I said.

Mr. Hu smiled at my outburst and said, "What's a year to us Chinese? It's but the blinking of an eye in our thousands of years of history. Time does not mean the same thing to us as to the Europeans, whom you,,of course, know well."

"I'm accused of being a spy because they think I know the British well."

"Their accusation is only an excuse with which to fool the masses. Sooner or later they will hit at everyone they do not

trust, and they probably think now is a good time to deal with you."

Mr. Hu got up to leave, asking me to telephone him whenever I wanted to see him to talk things over. As a final piece of advice he said, "Nearly all lower-ranking Communist Party officials suffer from an inferiority complex. Although they have power over us, somehow they have a deep feeling of inferiority. This is unfortunate, because some of them feel they need to reassure themselves by using that power to make our life uncomfortable or to humiliate us. When you are being questioned, be firm but be polite also. Don't offend them. They can be mean and spiteful. They can also be very cruel."

"It's not in my nature to be obsequious. But thank you for the warning. I shall remember it," I said.

I was so wrapped up in my own problems that only then did I think of asking him about himself.

Mr. Hu said philosophically, with an air of resignation, "I have joined the ranks of the workers. Another person has been appointed to my old job. When I tendered my letter of resignation to the Party secretary, I told him that I felt my class status as a former capitalist rendered me unsuitable for a responsible executive position."

The thought that he was now working as an ordinary worker in his own factory appalled me. But he was without bitterness.

"It's not so bad," he said. "In the Soviet Union, when the Communist Party took over, I believe all the capitalists were shot. I'm still alive, and I'm able to look after all three generations of my family. I asked the Party secretary to assign me to the most unskilled menial job. So now I am just a coolie, pushing drums of raw materials or carting coal. No one can be envious or jealous of a man doing work like that. You know, when I asked him for such a job, the Party secretary seemed to be quite sorry for me. We used to get on well together."

I recalled that my husband had told me that the reason Mr. Hu and his Party secretary got on well together was that Mr. Hu did the work and the Party secretary got the credit. Their factory won the Red Flag for good management and high production figures year after year.

"Did you not do all the work for him?"

"Yes, yes, I suppose I did most of the work. But I had spent

my whole life building up that factory. In 1930, when I started, I had only a few workers. In 1956, when I handed the factory over to the government, there were fifteen hundred of them. And we ran a laboratory as well as a training center for young technicians."

"Why do you want to be a coolie? Surely with your knowledge and experience you could do more useful work even if you must be a worker."

He made a negative gesture with his hand. "To be a coolie at times like this is not bad. We coolies work outside the plant and take our breaks in a shed. If anything should go wrong, no one can accuse me of sabotaging the machinery inside the plant. An ex-capitalist is always first on the list of suspects during a political campaign, when everyone is jittery."

With that sagacious remark he took his leave. When he shook hands with me, he said, "Keep fit and try to live long. If you live long enough, you might see a change in our country."

From my servants' attitude and the quality of the meal served to Mr. Hu, I knew that they welcomed his visit. When I went upstairs to my bedroom, Chen-ma was there laying out my dressing gown and slippers. She advised me to listen to any advice from Mr. Hu, who was, she declared, a good friend and a gentleman.

To talk to someone sympathetic had been comforting. I was now more than ever resolved not to write anything false to satisfy the demand of the Party officials.

A few days without hearing from my persecutors restored my good humor somewhat. My daughter's birthday was on August 18. I decided we should have a small dinner party to celebrate the event and to dispel some of the gloom that had descended on the household. I asked my daughter to invite a few of her friends, and I phoned my old friend Li Zhen and asked her to join us.

I first met Li Zhen in the autumn of 1935 when I arrived in London as a student. She had just graduated from the Royal College of Music. Shortly afterwards she married a Chinese government official and returned with him to China. She became a professor at her old school, the Shanghai Conservatory of Music, where she was the head of the piano department. Her husband, Su Lai, the son of a rich Chinese merchant in Hong

Kong, had received a liberal education in a British school and university. His hatred for the colonial atmosphere of Hong Kong in which he grew up and the glowing reports of a new Soviet society from the pens of prominent British writers and educators, which flooded British universities in the early thirties, combined to produce a profound effect on his character. He became a fiercely patriotic nationalist and at the same time a believer in Marxism.

When the Communist army marched towards Shanghai, Su Lai was jubilant, declaring that a new era of national resurgence and honest government was about to dawn in China. He refused to go to Taiwan with the Kuomintang government, tried to persuade his friends to do the same, and welcomed the Communist takeover with enthusiasm. In 1950, during the Thought Reform Movement in the universities, Li Zhen, his wife, lost her position as head of the piano department at the Conservatory of Music. Su Lai was surprised to find that the Party member appointed to take her place could not read music. A worse blow came in 1953 when Mao Zedong launched the Three and Five Antis Movement against corruption and bribery, aimed at the Shanghai industrialists and officials like Su Lai who had worked for economic agencies of the Kuomintang government. Although all the evidence pointed to his honesty, Su Lai became a target. He was confined to his office, where Party officials took turns questioning him. And struggle meetings were held against him.

A man like Su Lai was beyond the understanding of the average Chinese Communist, who believed the desire for revolutionary change to be the exclusive right of the poor and downtrodden. However, because of the Korean War and the boycott of China by the United States, the People's Government was anxious to develop trade with Hong Kong. Su Lai's wealthy relatives in the British colony used this opportunity to secure his release by negotiating directly with Beijing. The Shanghai authorities had no choice but to allow him to leave for Hong Kong with his two children when Beijing acceded to his family's request.

Frustrated in their attempt to punish severely the rich man's son who had dared to assume the proud mantle of Marxism, the local Communist officials in Shanghai refused to grant Li Zhen

an exit permit, using the pretext that her work with the Conservatory of Music required her to remain in Shanghai. She never saw her husband alive again. However, when he died in Hong Kong in 1957, in the more liberal atmosphere generated in China by the Eighth Party Congress in 1956, Li Zhen was given permission to attend his funeral and to see her children. She remained in Hong Kong until 1960, when she was invited back to Shanghai by the Conservatory of Music, to which she had a lifelong attachment. In the meantime, her children had been taken to Australia by an uncle.

When Li Zhen returned to Shanghai, the city was suffering from a severe food shortage as a result of the catastrophic economic failure of the Great Leap Forward Campaign launched by Mao Zedong in 1958. Long lines of people were forming at dawn at Shanghai police stations, waiting to apply for exit permits to leave the country. This was such an embarrassment for the Shanghai authorities that they viewed Li Zhen's return from affluent Hong Kong to starving Shanghai as an opportunity for propaganda. I read of her return in the local newspaper, which normally reported only the visits of prominent Party officials or foreign dignitaries. The Shanghai government hailed her as a true patriot and appointed her a delegate to the Political Consultative Conference, an organization of government-selected artists, writers, religious leaders, prominent industrialists, and former Kuomintang officials whose function was to echo and to express support for the government policy of the moment, to set an example for others of similar background, and to help project an image of popular support for Communist Party policy by every section of the community. In return, the government granted members of this organization certain minor privileges, such as better housing and the use of a special restaurant where a supply of scarce food could be obtained without the surrender of ration coupons.

The Communist officials always rewarded a person for his usefulness to them, not for his virtue, though they talked a lot about his virtue. Li Zhen had become a member of the Political Consultative Conference six years earlier, when China was suffering severe economic difficulties and food shortages. Now that they were a thing of the past, Li Zhen's usefulness to the Communist authorities was over. Besides, the Party liked people to show gratitude with a display of servile obedience and verbal

glorification of its policies. Li Zhen was quite incapable of either. In fact, she told me that she found attending meetings boring and maintained silence when she was expected to pay homage to Mao's policies on music and education. Her lack of enthusiasm for her role as a member of the Political Consultative Conference could not have failed to irritate the Party officials.

These thoughts were in my mind when I telephoned her. I was very pleased when she accepted my dinner invitation with alacrity.

When I got up in the early morning of August 18, my daughter's birthday, Chen-ma was not in the house. A devout Buddhist, she always went on this day to the temple at Jing An Si to say a special prayer for Meiping, of whom she was very fond. Thinking that I would disapprove of these temple visits because I am a Christian, she generally slipped out of the house early and returned quietly, hoping I would not notice her absence. I pretended to know nothing about it and never mentioned it to her.

While I was in the dining room doing the flowers, she returned. I heard her talking to the cook in the pantry in an unusually agitated voice. When she came into the hall, I saw that she was wiping her eyes with her handkerchief.

"What's happened, Chen-ma?" I called to her.

She was silent but came into the room. "What's happened at the temple?" I asked her.

She sat down on a dining chair and burst into tears. "They are dismantling the temple," she said between sobs.

"Who is dismantling the temple?" I asked her. "Not the government, surely!"

"Young people. Probably students. They said Chairman Mao told them to stop superstition. They also said the monks are counterrevolutionaries opposed to Chairman Mao."

"What did the monks do?"

"Nothing. The students rounded them up. Some were beaten. When I got there I saw them prostrate on the ground in the courtyard. There was a large crowd of onlookers. One of them told me that the students were going to dismantle the temple and burn the scriptures as they had done at other places. I actually saw some of the students climbing onto the roof and throwing down the tiles," Chen-ma said while wiping away her tears.

"Please, Chen-ma, you mustn't be too upset. You can worship

at home. The Christian churches have been closed for several years now. The Christians all worship at home. You can do the same, can't you? In any case, you mustn't cry on Meiping's birthday."

"Yes, yes, I mustn't cry on Meiping's birthday. But I was upset to see such wanton destruction." She tucked her handkerchief away and went out of the room.

Then the cook came in to complain that several items of food I had asked him to get for the party were unobtainable. He added that at the food market he and other cooks were jeered for working for wealthy families.

"I suppose they didn't like to see you buying more things than they could afford. Please don't let it bother you. As for the party, please just use whatever you were able to get at the market. I'm sure you will be able to put together a good meal for Meiping's birthday," I tried to reassure him.

While I could understand my cook's experience at the market as the result of class hatred generated by massive propaganda against the capitalist class, which to the general public was simply "the rich people," I was puzzled by what had happened at the temple, which was operated by the state. The monks there were in fact government employees. If the government had decided to change its policy, it could have closed the temple and transferred the monks to other forms of employment, as it had done earlier during the Great Leap Forward Campaign. Actually the temple at Jing An Si was a showplace for official visitors from Southeast Asia, to create the impression that China tolerated Buddhism. I remembered reading in the newspaper that the temple was reopened after the Great Leap Forward Campaign and the monks brought back again. I wondered why the students had been allowed to do what they were doing and whether the Shanghai municipal government was aware of what was going on at Jing An Si.

At six o'clock Li Zhen arrived. With her snow-white hair and calm smile, she always seemed the epitome of scholarly authority, tranquility, and distinction. Only her old friends like myself knew that behind her serene exterior was such great sensitivity that she could be depressed or elated by events that would have left an ordinary person relatively unmoved.

Li Zhen was a great artist and an able teacher. From time immemorial, China's tradition of respect for teachers gave them a special place in society. A good teacher who had devoted his life to education was compared to a fruitful tree, a phrase certainly applicable to Li Zhen, whose many former students worked as concert pianists, accompanists, and teachers all over China. Several had won international piano contests and received recognition abroad. I was very fond of Li Zhen and greatly admired her total devotion to music and her students. Since her return from Hong Kong, we had seen a great deal of each other. She would often bring her music and spend an evening with me listening to my records. I knew she often felt lonely and missed her children. Fortunately, since Liu Shaoqi had become chairman of the People's Republic in 1960 and Mao Zedong had retired from active administrative work, China had had no large-scale political upheavals until now, so that Li Zhen had been able to keep in touch with her children in Australia by correspondence.

After Lao-zhao had served us iced tea, I asked Li Zhen, "How is everything with you at the conservatory?"

"I'm afraid it's not good," she said sadly. "All classes have stopped. We are supposed to devote our entire time to the Cultural Revolution. Everybody has to write Big Character Posters. Professors like myself also have to write self-criticisms and read other people's Big Character Posters against us."

"Are there many against you?" I asked her anxiously.

"More are written against professors than against others. I don't know whether I have more than other professors. I haven't counted them. But so far, no struggle meeting has been arranged against me. My personal history is comparatively simple. I have never done any other work than being a teacher at the conservatory."

"Have there been many struggle meetings against other professors at the conservatory?"

"Yes, there have been several. One was against a former member of the Kuomintang, and another was against a former Rightist. The others are from other departments, so I don't know their personal history. These two are people who had already been denounced in former political movements," Li Zhen explained. "I hate struggle meetings. Somehow, everybody behaves like savages."

"Do you think you will be safe?"

"I have never opposed the Communist Party. I am entirely nonpolitical. When I graduated from the conservatory, I went to England to study. When I came back, I returned to the conservatory to teach. There is nothing about me the Party doesn't know. I should be safe, shouldn't I? But I don't know what may happen. There is something about this political campaign that seems different from previous ones."

"What is different?" I asked her.

"It's the attitude of the Party officials. In former political campaigns they were cocksure. They went into it boldly, full of confidence. This time, they seem nervous, almost as if they don't really want to do anything. The fact that they have limited their attack to people who have been denounced already seems to indicate they don't want to expand its scope. Perhaps after the failure of Mao's Great Leap Forward Campaign the Party officials are no longer certain Mao is always right to rely on political campaigns for progress."

What Li Zhen told me was very interesting. At that juncture we did not know, of course, that the Proletarian Cultural Revolution was in fact a struggle for power between the Maoists and the more moderate faction headed by Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping. It later became known that the chief Party secretary at the conservatory belonged to Liu Shaoqi's faction. He was murdered by Jiang Qing's Revolutionaries when she decided to install one of her favorite young men as the conservatory's Party secretary.

"The writing of Big Character Posters advocated by Mao seems to me a great waste. At the conservatory, a great deal of paper and thousands of writing brushes and bottles of ink have already been used. Yet when we needed extra lights in the classroom or additional musical instruments, there was never any money for them," said Li Zhen.

"What do the Big Character Posters say against you?" I asked.

"The usual criticism about my education in England, my sending the children to Australia, and my teaching method. When we were friendly with the Soviet Union, we were urged to teach Western music and train students to take part in international competitions. After we broke with the Soviet Union, Chairman Mao started to criticize Western music. We had to use

Chinese compositions exclusively for teaching. But there are so few Chinese compositions. Half my time was spent looking for teaching materials. It's hard enough to carry on as a teacher already. Now my students are made to turn against me. Do you know, one of them told me quietly that they had to write posters against me to protect themselves?"

"Exactly. You mustn't mind it. Don't let it hurt you! The poor young people have to do it."

"I feel very sad. It is almost as if my whole life is wasted," Li Zhen sighed.

"Don't be depressed by it! During the Great Leap Forward Campaign of 1958, the students in Meiping's school from capitalist families all had to criticize their family background. I told her to go ahead and criticize me. She did. The teacher and her fellow students all applauded her. It's only a formality. It's just acting. Don't let it bother you."

"I'm afraid I can't laugh it off like you do," Li Zhen said. "It's so unfair!"

"Doesn't your position as a delegate to the Political Consultative Conference give you some protection?" I asked my friend.

"I hear the Maoists want to abolish that organization. They call it an organization of radishes, red on the outside but white inside. They claim that while all the delegates talk as if they support the Communist Party, in actual fact they oppose the Party."

"Is that true?"

"Who knows? When the penalty for speaking one's mind is so great, nobody knows what anybody else thinks," Li Zhen said. I had to agree with her. In fact, after living in Communist China for so many years, I realized that one of the advantages enjoyed by a democratic government that allows freedom of speech is that the government knows exactly who supports it and who is against it, while a totalitarian government knows nothing of what the people really think.

When I told her that I too was involved in the Cultural Revolution, her reaction was the same as Winnie's. She said, "Now that Shell has closed their Shanghai office, the Party officials probably feel that they should use the opportunity of this political campaign to frighten you so that they can control you more easily in future." But she did not think the persecution against

me would be serious. "They can't save money by reducing your salary since you get no pay from the government. They can't fire you from your job since you don't work for them. I can't see that there is much they can do to you except to give you a fright."

"I hope you are right," I said.

"You know, I feel so discouraged that I sometimes think I can't go on," Li Zhen said.

"Why don't you ask to retire? Lots of people retire before they are sixty and take a cut in pension to avoid politics."

"I might just do that when the Cultural Revolution is over," Li Zhen said.

My daughter arrived with four of her young friends: Kong, a handsome male actor from her film studio whose father was a very famous film director of the thirties; a violinist with the municipal orchestra named Zhang; Sun Kai, a mathematics teacher at a technical college who was Meiping's special boyfriend; and my goddaughter Hean, who had been Meiping's childhood friend in Australia. They were all keenly interested in music and often gathered at our house to listen to our stereo records.

The young possess an infinite capacity to be cheerful. Although all of them came from the type of family likely to be adversely affected by the Cultural Revolution, no mention was made of it. They laughed and chatted about music and books throughout the meal. When Meiping took what remained of her large birthday cake into the kitchen to share with the servants, even Chen-ma recovered her usual good humor. I heard her scolding Meiping fondly for licking chocolate from her fingers. When the meal was over, the young people retired to Meiping's study to indulge in their favorite pastime of playing records on her record player.

Li Zhen and I went into the garden. Lao-zhao arranged two wicker chairs on the lawn, put cushions on them, lit a coil of mosquito incense, and placed it on a plate between the chairs. Then he brought us chrysanthemum tea in covered cups. Soothing music from a violin concerto came through the window. I settled deeper into the chair and gazed up at the starlit summer sky.

"You really have a comfortable life. You manage to enjoy the best of the Western as well as the Chinese world, don't you?"

Li Zhen said. "I wonder if that's what irritates the Party officials."

"Maybe. Those questioning me certainly seem to hate me. Do you think they really believe it is our fault that the workers and peasants in China are poor?"

"I think they are just envious. People can't all live in the same way. I have a big apartment. It's allocated to me by the conservatory. That shows they don't expect everyone to live in the same way," said Li Zhen. She seemed more relaxed now.

"Of course, you're different. You have done so much for the country. Hundreds of young people have passed through your hands. Each one of them carried with him something you taught him. Isn't that wonderful?" I truly admired my friend.

"I don't hear anyone in the conservatory say that about me. It's always how I taught decadent Western music to poison the minds of the young. They don't stop to think that I couldn't have done it if the government had forbidden it. All our teaching materials had to be passed by our Party secretary before we could use them for the students. And they seem to forget that they used to urge me to teach Western music in the early fifties when China was friendly with the Soviet Union." Li Zhen was indignant and distraught. I wished I hadn't mentioned her work again. To try to cheer her up, I asked about her children.

"They seem so remote, especially now that they're married," she said.

"Don't you long to see them?"

"Oh, I do! But what's the use thinking about it now? The government may never give me a passport to travel to Australia. The children certainly won't come here."

"Perhaps you shouldn't have come back from Hong Kong," I said.

"At the time it seemed the best thing to do. I am very attached to the conservatory, you know. I was trained there and I have worked there. It is really the most important thing in my life apart from the children. Many of my colleagues were fellow students when we studied there together. They all wrote to me. My students wrote to me. The Party secretary wrote to me. Everybody said I was needed at the conservatory, so I came back."

"What did Su Lai's family say about your decision?"

"After Su Lai died, they weren't very concerned about me. Most of them have now settled in Australia. They are a close-knit family. The uncles think of Su Lai's children as belonging to the family rather than to me. Of course, if I weren't able to make a living myself they would look after me. But I found the atmosphere a little stifling."

Li Zhen's last few words were drowned in a sudden burst of noise from drums and gongs in the street. Lao-zhao came into the garden and said, "There's a parade of students passing the house."

The young people also came outside. Standing on the terrace, Kong, the young actor, said, "It's probably the Red Guards. A few days ago, Jiang Qing received their representatives at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing. That means the Chairman approves of the Red Guard organization."

"Who organized them in the first place?" I asked him. "I have never heard of an organization called the Red Guard."

"It's something new for the Cultural Revolution, encouraged by Jiang Qing, I heard. Someone told me she actually quietly organized some students from Qinghua Middle School and then pretended it was the spontaneous idea of the students. Since she is the Chairman's wife, the idea caught on. Now, acting as the Chairman's representative, she has given the Red Guards official recognition." Kong laughed and added, "My father used to say she was a mediocre actress in the old days. She seems to have improved." (Subsequently, when Jiang Qing dealt with her "enemies" in the film world, Kong's father had a terrible time and barely survived the ordeal. Kong himself was not given a part in any film production for years because of his father.)

Next day, I read in the newspaper that on August 18 Mao Zedong had reviewed the first contingent of the Red Guards in Beijing. On the front page was a large photograph of Mao wearing the khaki uniform of a People's Liberation Army officer, with a red armband on which the three Chinese characters for "Red Guard"—*hong wei bing*—were written in his own handwriting. From the gallery of Tiananmen Square (the Gate of Heavenly Peace of the Forbidden City), he had smiled and waved as he received a thunderous ovation from the youngsters gathered below. His special message to the Red Guards was to carry the torch of the Cultural Revolution to the far corners of China and

to pursue the purpose of the Revolution to the very end. Young people all over China received this message from the man they had been brought up to worship as a call to arms. At that early stage of the Cultural Revolution the declared target was still only the "capitalist class," and it was there that the Red Guards focused their attack.

Group after group of young students continued to pass our house that evening, beating drums and gongs and shouting slogans. Meiping and her friends went out to watch the parade; Li Zhen and I retired to my study. The noise from the street was so loud that we couldn't talk. While we listened, I seemed to hear "Protect Chairman Mao" among the slogans shouted by the Red Guards. When Meiping came back alone, she told us that the students were carrying Mao's portrait and shouting, "Protect Chairman Mao" or "We shall protect Chairman Mao with our lives."

"Who is supposed to be threatening him?" I asked. None of us could think of an answer. In his lofty position as a demigod, Mao seemed beyond human reach.

Just as I was thinking of Stalin in the last years of his life, when he suspected so many people of attempting to kill him, Li Zhen said, "One of the symptoms of senile dementia is suspicion, and the other is paranoia."

"Oh, God!" I murmured.

Li Zhen, my daughter Meiping, and I stood in my study staring at each other speechlessly. We were rather frightened because suddenly the awesome reality that everybody in China, including ourselves, was at the mercy of Mao's whims struck each of us forcibly.

After a while, Li Zhen said, "I must go. No doubt we will know about everything as time goes on."

"I'll see Auntie Li home," said Meiping. "I don't think there are any buses. The streets have been taken over by the paraders."

I went with them to the front gate. Teams of teenagers holding colored flags with slogans and carrying portraits of Mao were passing down the street in front of my house. They were preceded by others beating drums and gongs. Every few yards a leader read out slogans written on a piece of paper, echoed loudly by the others. All the young paraders wore armbands of

red cotton on which was written "Red Guard" in imitation of Mao's style of handwriting. The parade looked to me well organized and carefully directed, not something the young people could have done on their own. There was the hand of authority behind it, I thought.

Li Zhen and I said goodbye to each other. She walked away with Meiping, who was pushing her bicycle beside her. I stood there watching them until the parading youngsters hid Li Zhen's snow-white hair from my view.

That was the last glimpse I ever had of my dear old friend. A month later, when I was under house arrest, she committed suicide after a particularly humiliating experience. The Red Guards placed a pole across the gate of the conservatory less than four feet from the ground and made Li Zhen crawl under it to demonstrate that she was "a running dog of the British imperialists" because of her education in England. They then held a struggle meeting to compel her to confess her "love for Western music." She was found dead the next day, seated by her piano, with the gas turned on. The note she left behind held one sentence: "I did my best for my students."

The servants had already retired, so I waited downstairs for my daughter to get back. When she returned, we mounted the stairs together in silence. On the landing, she put her arms around me to hug me good night. There was much I wanted to say to her, some words of love and reassurance, but I felt choked with a deep feeling of sadness and fear that I could not explain.

"Well, this certainly is the one birthday I won't forget," my daughter said good-humoredly.

After she had gone into her bedroom, I closed the windows to shut out the noise from the street. The sound was muted and seemed further away, but without the cool evening breeze the house was very hot. Parade after parade passed outside. The resolute footsteps and emotional shouting voices of young men and women fired with revolutionary fervor continued to penetrate the walls.

I went into my study, took a book from the shelf, and tried to read. But I was restless and could not concentrate. Wandering aimlessly from room to room, I rearranged the flowers, throwing away the dead ones and putting water into the vases. I straightened the paintings on the walls and picked up ivory

figures to examine the delicate carvings. All the time the parades went on outside. Even when a parade did not pass down the street by my house, I could hear the sound of the drums and gongs. After wandering around the house, I went finally to Meiping's room to see how she was. There was no answer to my light tap on the door. I opened it gently and found my daughter already asleep. Her black hair was spread on the white pillow, and her sweet young face was peaceful in repose. The light from the gap in the door fell on a snapshot of my husband in a small silver frame on her bedside table. I closed the door softly.

These were the two people in the world closest to my heart. One had died. The other was alive, and her life was just unfolding.

"Take good care of yourself and look after Meiping. I am sad to have to leave you both so soon."

I could hear again the weakened voice of my husband speaking these words before he lapsed into a deep coma from which he never awakened. That was nearly nine years ago. He had charged me to look after our daughter. I had done just that and watched her grow with joy in my heart. She was intelligent, beautiful, and warmhearted. I never had to worry about her. But now, with the start of the Cultural Revolution, a dark cloud had come over our lives. As I tried to look into the future, a deep feeling of uncertainty overwhelmed me. For the first time, I felt unable to control the direction of my own life and guide my daughter. That frightened me.

To face problems and changes with determination and optimism was the way I had lived. When my husband died in 1957, I was shattered by my loss and, for a time, felt half-dead with grief myself. But I found that taking positive action to cope with problems one by one was therapeutic and good for the renewal of courage.

In old China, women who lost their husbands lost their own identity. They became virtually nonpersons, subjected to ridicule and gossip by the neighbors. Although the new marriage law passed by the People's Government in 1952 protected women in general and forbade discrimination, the old prejudice against widows and unmarried older women persisted. Chinese society seemed to be offended and embarrassed by the sight of a woman trying to stand on her own.

When I started working at the Shell office, members of the

senior Chinese staff were dismayed that a woman with no administrative experience was put in charge of them. I had to prove myself over and over again to earn their respect and confidence. There was nothing I enjoyed more than meeting challenges and overcoming difficulties. And I was pleased and proud that I was able to maintain our old lifestyle in spite of losing my husband. Never in my life had I found myself in a situation so puzzling as the Cultural Revolution. I knew for a fact that whenever a Chinese national was appointed to a senior position in a foreign firm, the Department of Industry and Commerce of the Shanghai municipal government must give permission. Since the police kept a dossier on everybody, the government should know everything about me. There seemed no valid reason for the sudden accusation against me. While Winnie, Li Zhen, and Mr. Hu all seemed to think my being the target of persecution not unexpected, I did not know how best to conduct myself in the days ahead except to resist firmly all efforts to make me write a false confession. That would inevitably bring me into confrontation with officials of the Party. What would be the outcome of such confrontation? How would it affect my daughter's life? Standing outside her bedroom, I was so deeply troubled and felt so helpless that I invoked the guidance of God in a special prayer.

In the days after Mao Zedong reviewed the first group of Red Guards in Beijing and gave them his blessing, the Red Guards in Shanghai took over the streets. The newspaper announced that the mission of the Red Guards was to rid the country of the "Four Olds": old culture, old customs, old habits, and old ways of thinking. There was no clear definition of "old"; it was left to the Red Guards to decide.

First of all, they changed street names. The main thoroughfare of Shanghai along the waterfront, the Bund, was renamed Revolutionary Boulevard. Another major street was renamed August the First to commemorate Army Day. The road on which the Soviet Union had its consulate was renamed Anti-Revisionist Street, while the road in front of the former British consulate was renamed Anti-Imperialist Street. I found my own home now stood on Ouyanghai Road, named to commemorate a soldier who had given his life trying to save a mule from an oncoming train. The Red Guards debated whether to reverse the system

of traffic lights, as they thought red should mean "go" and not "stop." In the meantime, the traffic lights stopped operating.

They smashed flower and curio shops because they said only the rich had the money to spend on such frivolities. Other shops were examined, and goods they considered offensive or unsuitable for a socialist society they destroyed or confiscated. Their standard was very strict. Because they did not think socialist man should sit on a sofa, all sofas became taboo. Other things, such as innerspring mattresses, silk, velvet, cosmetics, and clothes that reflected fashion trends of the West, were all tossed onto the streets to be carted away or burnt. Traditionally, shops in China had borne names that were considered propitious, such as Rich and Beautiful for a fabric shop, Delicious Aroma for a restaurant, Good Fortune and Longevity for a shop that sold hats for older men, Comfort for a shoe shop, Happy Homes for a furniture shop, etc. When the government took over the shops in 1956, the names had not been changed. Now, condemned by the Red Guards, they had to be changed to something more revolutionary. Uncertain what alternative would be acceptable, managers of a large number of shops chose the name East Is Red, the title of a song eulogizing Mao Zedong, which during the Cultural Revolution took the place of the national anthem. The Red Guards had removed the goods displayed in the windows of the shops, and Mao's official portraits replaced them. A person walking down the streets in the shopping district would not only be confused by rows of shops bearing the same name but also have the uncanny feeling of being watched by a hundred faces of Mao.

Daily, my servants reported to me all these incredible actions of the Red Guards. I became so curious that I decided to venture out to see for myself.

I had in a bank in the shopping district two fixed deposits that had matured. I decided to cash one of them so that I would have some extra money in the house, since experience told me that shortages of food and everything else always followed political upheavals. To keep alive, one had to resort to the black market, where prices were astronomical. I remembered my cook paying 50 yuan for a piece of pork that was 2 or 3 yuan in normal times, after the failure of Mao's Great Leap Forward Campaign.

Both Lao-zhao and Chen-ma suggested that I should be suita-

bly dressed for going out, as the lady next door had had an unpleasant encounter with the Red Guards, who had confiscated her shoes and cut open the legs of her slacks when she went out to visit a friend. So before setting out from the house to go to the bank, I put on an old shirt, a pair of loose-fitting trousers borrowed from Chen-ma, and my exercise shoes. As the August sun was strong, Chen-ma handed me the wide-brimmed straw hat my daughter had brought back from the country after working in a rural commune in a program for students to help the peasants.

The streets were in a ferment of activity. Red Guards were everywhere. There were also many idle spectators. At this stage of the Cultural Revolution, the "enemy" was the capitalist class, so the majority of the population felt quite safe. To them the activities of the Red Guards were spectacular and entertaining. Many of them were strolling through the streets to watch the fun.

Groups of Red Guards were explaining to clusters of onlookers the meaning and purpose of the Cultural Revolution. I listened to one group for a little while and was puzzled and surprised to hear the Red Guard speaker telling the people that they would be "liberated" by the Cultural Revolution. Hadn't the people been liberated already in 1949 when the Communist Party took over China? Was that liberation not good enough, so that the people had to be liberated again? It almost seemed to me that the Communist Party was engaging in self-criticism. But that was unthinkable. I dismissed what I had heard as unimportant, perhaps merely a slip of the tongue by the young speaker. In fact, to liberate the proletariat again became the theme of the Cultural Revolution. Mao was to claim that his opponents in the Party leadership, headed by Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping, had revived capitalism in China. However, this was not revealed until much later in the year.

Other Red Guards were stopping buses, distributing leaflets, lecturing the passengers, and punishing those whose clothes they disapproved of. Most bicycles had red cards bearing Mao's quotations on the handlebars; riders of the few without them were stopped and given warning. On the sidewalks, the Red Guards led the people to shout slogans. Each group of Red Guards was accompanied by drums and gongs and large reproductions of Mao's portrait mounted on stands. At many street corners, loudspeakers were blaring revolutionary songs at intervals. In my proletarian outfit of old shirt and wide trousers, I blended with the scene and attracted no special attention. I walked steadily in the direction of the bank.

Suddenly I was startled to see the group of Red Guards right in front of me seize a pretty young woman. While one Red Guard held her, another removed her shoes and a third one cut the legs of her slacks open. The Red Guards were shouting, "Why do you wear shoes with pointed toes? Why do you wear slacks with narrow legs?"

"I'm a worker! I'm not a member of the capitalist class! Let me go!" The girl was struggling and protesting.

In the struggle, the Red Guards removed her slacks altogether, much to the amusement of the crowd that had gathered to watch the scene. The onlookers were laughing and jeering. One of the Red Guards slapped the girl's face to stop her from struggling. She sat on the dusty ground and buried her face in her arms. Between sobs she murmured, "I'm not a member of the capitalist class!"

One of the Red Guards opened her bag and took out her work pass to examine it. Then he threw the pass and her trousers to her. Hastily she pulled on the trousers. She did not wait for them to give back her shoes but walked away quickly in her socks. Almost immediately the same Red Guard seized a young man and shouted, "Why do you have oiled hair?"

I did not wait to see the outcome of this encounter but went straight to the bank. In China, every bank was a branch of the People's Bank, which belonged to the state. There was no brass railing or small windows. The tellers sat behind a plain wooden counter to deal with the depositors. I approached one of the women and placed my withdrawal slip on the counter in front of her.

Before I left the house, I had considered how much cash I should withdraw. The two deposits past the maturity date were for 6,000 yuan (approximately $2,400) and 20,000 yuan (approximately $8,000). The cost of living in China was low, as were wages and salaries. In 1966, 6,000 yuan was a large sum of money; 20,000 yuan represented a small fortune. The bank was really a department of the government. Those who worked

there were charged with the task of encouraging savings so that money could be channeled to the state. During political campaigns the tellers had the power to refuse payment of large sums of money to depositors even when the deposits had matured. Sometimes they would demand a letter of approval from the depositor's place of work to certify the reason for the withdrawal. To avoid a possible rejection of my request to withdraw my money, I decided to cash the lesser sum of 6,000 and to renew the 20,000 for another year. But I had no difficulty whatever. The teller handed me the cash without uttering a single word, and before I had finished counting the bank notes, she had already picked up her knitting again. Although the walls of the small bank were covered with Cultural Revolution slogans and a number of Big Character Posters, the atmosphere inside was a contrast to the tension generated by the Red Guards on the streets.

As I stepped once again onto the sun-baked sidewalk, I rather regretted that I had been too timid to try to cash the larger sum. At the same time I was glad I had encountered no difficulty. I headed for home, but when I turned the corner, I was almost knocked down by a group of excited Red Guards leading an old man on a length of rope. They were shouting and hitting the poor man with a stick. I quickly stepped back and stood against the wall to let them pass. Suddenly the old man collapsed on the ground as if too tired to go on. He was a pitiful sight with his shirt torn and a few strands of gray hair over his half-shut eyes. The Red Guards pulled the rope. When he still did not get up, they jumped on him. The old man shrieked in pain.

"Dirty capitalist! Exploiter of workers! You deserve to die!" shouted the Red Guards.

My heart was palpitating wildly. The sudden and unexpected encounter with the group of Red Guards and the proximity of the suffering old man combined to give me a fright and made me think of Mr. Hu. I wondered how he was faring. Nearly two weeks had passed since he visited me. I thought I really ought to telephone him to see if he was all right. I slipped away and hastened towards my house. The streets were now even more crowded than an hour before. The Red Guards were seizing people indiscriminately. There were loud screams of protest and tearful pleading from the victims. When I saw that they were seizing women with permanent waves and cutting their hair off,

I was really thankful that Chen-ma had given me the large straw hat to cover my curly hair. There were quite a number of policemen on the streets, but they were just watching.

It was a relief to leave the busy shopping area behind me. The residential streets were more peaceful. However, when I turned into my street, I saw a large crowd of people in front of my house. They were looking at a Big Character Poster pasted on the front gate of my neighbor's house across the road. He was the chief engineer of the Shanghai Aluminum Company, formerly a Swiss firm, taken over a few years earlier by the Chinese government. Workers of the plant had put up the poster denouncing him as a "running dog of Swiss imperialism." Beside the poster was a smaller one written in a childish script. It was signed by my neighbor's two small children, who had joined in the denunciation of their father and vowed to sever their relationship with him. This unusual poster from an eleven-year-old and a ten-year-old was the reason for the crowd.

When Lao-zhao opened the gate for me, I asked about the poster signed by the children. Lao-zhao told me that my neighbor's servant had told him that it was the father's idea, to save his children from persecution.

The Red Guards' activities intensified by the hour. The very next day they entered the house of my neighbor across the street. His wife refused to open the front gate and turned the garden hose on the Red Guards to prevent them from entering. They simply smashed the gate down, snatched the hose from her, and drenched her with water. Then they knocked her down and beat her for resisting their revolutionary action. Her children tried to defend their mother and got into a fight with the Red Guards. They were denounced as "puppies of the running dog of Swiss imperialism" and made to assist the Red Guards in burning their father's books.

Day and night the city resounded with the loud noise of drums and gongs. News of looting and the ransacking of private homes all over the city reached me from different sources. I tried to reach Mr. Hu by telephone without success. It was the same with my other friends. The violence of the Red Guards seemed to have escalated. I heard of victims being humiliated, terrorized, and often killed when they offered resistance. Articles in the newspapers and talks by leading Maoists encouraged the Red Guards and congratulated them on their vandalism. They were

declared to be the true successors to the cause of the proletarian revolution and exhorted to be fearless in their work of toppling the old world and building a new one based on Mao's teachings.

I felt utterly helpless. There was nothing I could do to prevent the destruction of my home and the loss of all my possessions. My daughter became very worried. More than once, she talked about our not being able to live on her small salary. I decided the time had come to tell her about my bank accounts in Hong Kong and elsewhere, which would be more than sufficient to cover our living expenses. Actually I myself was more worried about her status after the Cultural Revolution. If there was to be a new society in which descendants of capitalist families were to become a permanently unprivileged class in China, like the untouchables in India, her life would be unthinkable. To me this was of more importance than the loss of our material possessions.

To take care of the servants, I decided to give them the 6,000 yuan I had obtained from the bank right away, before the Red Guards came to our house. At first they refused to accept the money, reiterating their wish to remain to look after Meiping and myself. They also offered to hide my jewelry and valuables in their homes. Not wishing to implicate them in my own difficulties, I refused. I called Chen-ma, Lao-zhao, and Cook to my study and discussed with them how best to divide the money among the three of them. Because the gardener was not a full-time employee and came only occasionally, I decided to give him only 400 yuan. Chen-ma offered to take less than the other two because, she said, "They have to take care of their wives." After I had divided the money, I placed the 400 yuan for the gardener in an envelope, intending to give it to him the next time he came to work.

I told my servants that if they were afraid, they could leave anytime. When the Cultural Revolution was over, if I was financially able, I would give them additional money, for they had all been with me for a very long time.

After that had been done, I waited for the Red Guards.